

NEWS RELEASE
MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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Hearing on Natural Gas Delivery Rates Begins Tuesday at PSC

HELENA - State regulators invite the public to comment during a NorthWestern Energy natural gas rate case hearing that begins Tuesday at the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC).

The hearing on the utility's application to increase natural gas delivery service rates kicks off at 9 a.m. Tuesday at the Commission offices, 1701 Prospect Ave. in Helena. The PSC streams its hearings live at www.psc.mt.gov.

NorthWestern is seeking to recover increased costs of capital investments to its natural gas system as well as increased costs of operating, administering and maintaining natural gas utility service, according to its filing with the PSC.

The company, which delivers natural gas to about 182,100 customers in 105 Montana communities, last filed a natural gas rate case with the Commission in 2009. In response to that filing, the Commission approved a stipulated decrease of \$988,963 in the utility's allowed natural gas revenues. The Commission allocated that amount with a 1 percent decrease to all customer classes except the storage class, which remained constant.

The rate case comes during historic lows in natural gas prices. The utility's filing, however, seeks to recover costs of infrastructure delivering natural gas to Montanans. The utility is seeking an additional \$15.5 million in annual revenue for transmission and distribution costs. Supply costs would not be impacted.

Commissioners last month approved interim rates pending a full review of the company's application. During the upcoming hearing, Commissioners will question utility representatives and other parties about NorthWestern Energy's requested increase. Fifteen witnesses are scheduled to testify during the evidentiary portion of the hearing, which could continue through the week. The Commission is expected to issue its final order on the request this summer.

The Commission welcomes written or oral comments during the hearing. Public comments may also be mailed to the Commission or filed through the agency's website, www.psc.mt.gov, by clicking on "Public Comments" found under the "Consumer Assistance" tab at the top of the page.

NorthWestern's application is available at the PSC's website, www.psc.mt.gov, by searching under "Electronic Documents" for docket D2012.9.94.

For more information, visit psc.mt.gov or contact PSC Communications/Research Director Justin Post at (406) 444-6171. Follow the PSC at [www.Twitter.com/@MT_PSC](https://twitter.com/MT_PSC) or visit www.Facebook.com/MontanaPSC.